

SUPERINTENDENTS ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES (SAC)
MINUTES
JANUARY 11, 2005
9 A.M. – 1 P.M.
STATE BOARD ROOM

Attending:

John Paul Amis, David Baird, Dale Brown, Danny Brown, Fred Carter, Monte Chance, Anna Craft, Dr. Stephen Daeschner, Linda France, Kay Freeland, Larry Harrison, Linda Hatter, Dr. Roland Haun, Bruce Johnson, Steve Knight, Dr. Jan Lantz, Tim McGinnis, Tim Moore, Ed McNeel, Stan Riggs, Dr. Pam Rogers, Gary Rye, Mike Sander, Dr. John Settle, John Shook, Tom Sizemore, Dr. H. M. Snodgrass, James Stevens, Teresa Wallace, Frank Welch, and Commissioner Gene Wilhoit

Sharing Local Activities

Commissioner Wilhoit indicated that the growth districts have grown faster than in any recent years, and it appears that inward immigration has attributed to this reported growth. This has resulted in SEEK funds being reduced below what was projected which impacts transportation.

Superintendents were encouraged to remind their legislators, especially those in leadership positions, that the SEEK calculation needs to be fully funded. Kyna Koch will be having initial conversations with the cooperatives to develop a draft for the Department to use in discussions with legislators and local school districts.

Dale Brown shared a letter developed by 32 superintendents of the Green River Regional Educational Cooperative dated January 7 to the Governor, which outlined talking points on the state budget issues to be used in discussions with legislators and others.

CATS On-Line Assessment, Report Delivery and In-State Scoring (Roger Ervin)

Commissioner Wilhoit indicated that the Department is moving forward with the piloting of on-line testing. On-line testing has the potential to return test results (data) to schools and teachers more efficiently in order for them to do the job of teaching our children, it will be instrumental in getting Kentucky teachers involved in the scoring process, and it will improve the test structure. By using technology, different configurations of forms can be administered. A number of school districts will be taking the occupational skills testing online in February, and a number of school have signed up for spring on-line CATS testing for 10th grade language arts and 11th grade social studies.

Based on the Department's survey of local school superintendents, the following barriers were identified:

- Districts' operating systems have been upgraded over the last year; however, workstations are out of date. To administer the on-line assessment, every testing site would have to have at least Windows 98. However, Windows 95 & 98 is very vulnerable to viruses.
- A support mechanism of teachers to proctor this activity and students with sufficient computer expertise is a must. Computer assisted learning would have to be going on in the classroom.
- The number of teachers who meet the technology skills standards is lower than desired. It is important for teachers to use this tool throughout the year, not just for a one-time event.
- The telephonic capability of districts is not so that teachers can call out for assistance during the testing process.

David Couch will compile the survey results and forward them to superintendents.

The Department understands that testing guidelines will have to be changed to accommodate technology-based assessment. To maintain security, students should not be tested over a prolonged timeframe in a single content area. In the future, students may take the assessment when they are individually ready and this will vary per student. The Department is exploring various forms of technology. Commissioner Wilhoit indicated that research confirms that it is critical that teachers are comfortable that the students can perform on the on-line assessment or the students will reflect teacher bias!

An RFP has been issued by the Commonwealth to transform Kentucky's infrastructure system to a fiber-like system. This process should take approximately 18 months. Currently, Kentucky does not have a backbone to support high capacity needs. This system will help to move towards video and voice as well as data exchange. **The Commissioner encouraged superintendents to educate the Legislature with regard to this issue. Dr. Roland Haun called for a public awareness campaign to enlighten the general public on what is really going on in education with finances/teachers/etc.**

Superintendents were supportive of the on-line testing initiative. They encouraged the Department to determine hardware specifications as soon as possible and to avoid sharp spikes in technology encountered by districts over the years. Districts can't continue to carry the burden of cost alone. Commissioner Wilhoit assured them that he was trying to be creative in looking at ways that this burden could be reduced. Currently, Kentucky is spending \$23 million on textbooks per year. He would like to give districts flexibility to use their textbook money for technology. Superintendents pointed out that this process might need something built in so not to deny the poorer districts to equal access. **The Commissioner encouraged superintendents to forward to him as soon as possible any additional suggestions on how to make this initiative happen.**

Issues on Implementation of the Knowledge Management Portal (Robert Hackworth)

Federal legislation and state pressure to improve accountability in the education process have led to significantly increased demands for education resources that are aligned to state adopted academic standards and benchmarks. In response to this need and Commissioner Wilhoit's Seven Steps Forward in Assessment, the KDE, in conjunction with KY public school teachers and administrators, has identified the need for a system designed to allow educators to make available and share units of study, lesson plans, assessments, and other educational resources electronically or via any standard web browser. The system should link together the assessment data from assessments with instructional resources to provide students, instructors, administrators, and parents a snapshot of academic progress as well as the tools to continue or improve academic progress. This portal should allow a dynamic and personalized online "workspace" with powerful interactive features that include site search, live hyperlinks, downloadable reference materials, unit of study and lesson plan creation tools, discussion rooms and so on. The portal must offer complete functionality within the current and future framework of the KETS network. It must also offer complete functionality to users outside of the KETS network, who may be working from home through their own ISP.

Superintendents were in agreement that this system would be a vital tool to teachers and schools statewide, and that the system would help address equity in education.

Commissioner Wilhoit noted that the Department has an offer from a company to enter into a joint venture to help with the writing process. The Department is hoping to come away with a process to be used via technology to score student writing. The process would point out all grammar and

sentence structure errors, all spelling, and all use of language. This would help eliminate the enormous amount of time teachers spend on the up-front activities, coaching, grading, etc. in the writing process. This would force students to do this on their own, and teachers could be more focused on the content of the writing piece. **Commissioner Wilhoit is looking for districts to pilot this process.**

Revisiting the Content Standards (Starr Lewis and Nancy LaCount)

The Department of Education is in the process of reviewing the Core Content for Assessment. The purpose is to make sure that the Core Content for Assessment is clear for both assessment and instruction, is aligned and consistent with national and international content standards and is presented to teachers in a concise and organized way. This review is timely as the Department prepares to issue a Request for Proposal for the assessment and accountability cycle that begins in 2007. The clarification of the Core Content for Assessment is for the 2007 state assessment.

Staff is in the middle of a process of engaging teachers in conversations on whether the Core Content Standards and other resource documents are providing teachers with the best guidance on what students should know and be able to do. Brian Gong, with the National Center for Assessment and Accountability, is facilitating the review process along with KDE staff. As part of the process, teachers and staff are reviewing national standards for all content areas to determine alignment and any changes since the last clarification of the Core Content for Assessment. In addition, other resources such as the American Diploma Project, NAEP Frameworks, the New Standards Performance Standards, McRel Standards, the ACT assessments and other research-based materials are being used as part of the clarification and alignment process. The Core Content for Assessment will be organized by grade levels, which is different than the current organization, which is by grade spans.

The Department of Education will request feedback on the clarified Core Content for Assessment via an electronic survey that will be posted by content areas and grade levels on the web. The field will be asked to respond to questions similar to those that the teacher teams are asked. The Department anticipates that the survey will be posted in February for the field review. Once the web survey is ready, the Commissioner will send correspondence to superintendents, principals, teachers and other educational partners requesting feedback. Also in February, the Department will update the Kentucky Board of Education on progress on the Core Content for Assessment. In April, the Board will review any changes, clarifications, or refinements made to the Core Content for Assessment.

One superintendent voiced a concern for his administrators and teachers that the practical living, vocational, and arts and humanities are too wide and the test scores are not a true reflection of what students know. Commissioner Wilhoit indicated that the Department is looking at making the arts assessment comparable to the other content areas. There needs to be a closer alignment between middle school and the first two years of high school in terms of solid grounding. **Another superintendent requested that the social studies assessment be more streamlined.** Concerns were expressed with vocational schools wanting adult full-time students instead of high school half-time students and with vocational programs being geared more towards college-bound students. They also expressed that there is a lack of vocational funding. Commissioner Wilhoit encouraged superintendents to remind their principals that the clarified Core Content for Assessment document will be ready for review around February.

Revisions to the Writing Assessment (Starr Lewis and Nancy LaCount)

The Department is attempting to correct some of the problems in writing and to preserve writing as an important skill for graduating students. Department staff engaged in a discussion with the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) in early December around writing instruction and writing assessment. The KBE and the Department agree that more performance levels are needed for on-demand and over-time situations and that scoring writing differently than in the past should be considered. The KBE directed the KDE to pull together a writing task force made up of people across the state from different roles and different points of view. The KBE decided that the writing portfolio should be assessed at grades 4, 7, and 12 and that the on-demand writing be assessed at 5, 8, and 12. The main goal of writing instruction in writing assessment is to help students become independent writers. In a conversation with the KBE, it was determined that the instruction and assessment of grammar and mechanics (conventions) should be more explicit. The Department will look toward an assessment of grammar at the 10th grade and a more explicit test of students' mechanics skills at that level. The Department will also make available to districts optional local assessments to use to determine where their students are in their writing skills at grade 3, 6, and 11. Members of the National Technical Advisory Panel on Assessment and Accountability (NTAPPA) attended the prior the KBE meeting to provide them with guidance and feedback on the more technical features of writing and assessment. They advised the Board that at least three pieces of writing should be included in a writing portfolio to make it valid and reliable. The Department recommended to the KBE, in terms of scoring, increasing the number of performance levels (6) to make writing more consistent with the other content areas. To sum it up, the writing portfolio will include fewer pieces and will be more precise and more relevant! The Department will address the need for professional development in writing instruction. **One superintendent noted the need to have results back in a timely manner in order for this process to be more meaningful for seniors, and the recommendation was made for the writing portfolio to be a part of the high school transcript. Commissioner Wilhoit will request the Council on Postsecondary Education to ask the institutions to require portfolio results for submission into the community and technical college systems.** The KBE will act on these changes in April.

Reshaping the Secondary Experience (Linda Pittenger and Tom Welch)

The Department is forming a partnership with the International Center for Leadership (ICLE), lead by Dr. Willard Daggett, to advance the state's work to improve secondary education. Many Kentucky districts will be joining the ICLE's National Successful Practices Network (SPN). Regional meetings are scheduled for April 11, 12, and 13 for districts that have joined the network and for other districts who might consider joining the network to learn more about the network. It will also be an opportunity for other districts that want to learn more about the network to participate. The Department is also talking with other stakeholder groups about this initiative. Dr. Daggett is scheduled to speak at the Prichard Committee's May meeting. The Department will wrap considerable resources around this partnership. Contact Linda Pittenger at (502)564-4472 or lpitteng@kde.state.ky.us if you should have additional questions or comments.

**NEXT MEETING:
Statewide Superintendents' Meeting (T)
April 27, 2005**